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PARENTS' AND TEACHERS' GUIDE

FOR

Shalom *Secrets*



RABBI CHAIM TRAINER

Shalom Secrets: The Concept

You probably remember being told not to fight with your siblings and classmates. We knew that our parents and teachers wanted us to live in peace. We also tell our own children how bad it is to fight. How peaceful and happy their lives would be if they could just learn to get along with each other.

Very few of us, though, teach our children and students how to accomplish this important goal. What should they do when they find themselves in a conflict? How are they supposed to avoid the fights that seem to happen almost spontaneously?

Wouldn't it be great if we could equip our children with tools they could use to resolve their conflicts? Or how about giving them the skills to avoid fights altogether?

That is the goal of *Shalom Secrets*. You can use this easy-to-follow, step-by-step method to empower your children and students with this invaluable skill: the ability to resolve their conflicts.

The Old Way

Look around and you'll notice two approaches parents and educators use in dealing with children's conflicts. I'll call one the "Ignore" approach and the other the "Police Officer" approach.

The Ignore Approach

An unpopular boy approached a colleague of mine during recess. "Rebbe," he said, "no one lets me play!"

My friend turned to the boy and said, "Recess is your problem! Don't come to me to solve your problems."

After relating the story to me, my colleague commented, "That's the only way they're ever going to learn. We can't solve their problems."

Many parents and teachers agree with this view. They believe that the only way children will learn how to resolve their conflicts is by trial and error, and learning from their own mistakes.

The Police Officer Approach

Imagine this typical scene:

Two children come running over to you. "He pushed me!" one of them cries.

You turn around to the other boy and look him in the eye. "Did you push him?" you ask.

"He pushed me first!"

You turn back to the first boy, "Is that true?"

"He called me fatso!"

"Well, he called me a baby!"

And it goes on and on. We continue to investigate and try to figure out who's right. Then we punish the "wrong" child.

This is the Police Officer approach. It's based on the premise that if we find out who's right, we'll have peace. But figuring out who's wrong seldom brings real peace. (See *Shalom Secrets*, Secret #10). Yet the approach is still a common one.

Most of us alternate between these two methods depending on our mood at the particular

Guide for Shalom Secrets

In this guide you will find the following notes for each secret:

Answers to the Test Questions: An answer key with the answers to the questions found in the *Shalom Secrets Workbook* is provided to make it easier to review with your children or students. Important explanations of some answers are provided.

Tips and Suggestions: Suggestions for how to enhance the class discussions on the topic of each secret will be included here. There may also be techniques for handling the various questions that might be asked, as well as advice on how to deal with specific conflicts that may come up.

Activities: Class activities are suggested for each secret. Read these before teaching the secret, since some of them should be done specifically before teaching the secret.

Of course, you don't have to do every activity that is suggested; some may not be a good fit for your or your students' personalities. You also may not have sufficient time. The more activities we do, though, the more the children will absorb and remember these important concepts.

Be sure the children read the "Note of Welcome to All Readers" on Page 15 of *Shalom Secrets*. It helps set the tone by explaining what the book is about and why it's called *Shalom Secrets*.

As this guide will be used with parents and educators of both boys and girls, I have chosen to alternate between using the words she/her and he/him in my examples.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my daughter, Chayala Tawil, for contributing very creative and meaningful activities for the lessons.

is necessary to restrain our anger and to seek other effective methods of calming ourselves down. However, if we express our feelings in constructive ways, as the book will expand on, there can be many benefits, including eliminating our feelings of anger and frustration.

Secret #9

Answers to the Test Questions

1. d
2. c
3. b
4. a
5. d
6. b

Activity

Using books such as *The Other Side of the Story* and *It Wasn't How It Seemed*, which tell stories that show the importance of judging favorably, tell the first part of the story, and stop before the favorable explanation is revealed. Ask them to try to think of a way to complete the story depicting the character in a favorable light. Then share the real ending with them.

Secret #10

Answers to the Test Questions

1. goal
2. peace, or shalom
3. right
4. worse (or bigger)

5. wrong

Tips and Suggestions

As on the page after this secret in the *Shalom Secrets* book, “Mr. Question” will appear from time to time. He is used to clarify a point that might be too confusing for the child if it was part of the secret itself. The points Mr. Question makes are important and should be read and discussed with your children and students.

Here are some responses came up with to answer the discussion question of why they can open only one box.

1. If we prove that the other person is wrong, he will be upset and we won't have shalom.
2. You might actually be wrong, and then you'll be upset.

Activity

After your class finishes learning the secret, tell your students to take out two blank sheets of paper. Have them write on the top of one paper, **Who is Right**, and on the other paper, **Shalom**. Call up two children to act out the following court case. Each one will state his case. Give them a minute to look over their lines so they can read them fluently. Have the students (including the students who acted) write who they think is right, on the paper titled “Who is Right.” Then, on the paper titled “Shalom,” have them write an idea they can think of that might make shalom. Then you can read the papers aloud and ask them which pile would bring happiness and peace to the situation.

For Boys:

Yaakov: “I invited Binyamin over to my house to play. He came over and we

decided to play basketball. I wanted to play with the basketball with a better grip, but he wanted to play with the newer basketball. I say that since it's my house, he has to play with the ball that I want."

Binyamin: "My parents always tell me that we should be nice to guests, so I don't know why he says he should decide. Anyway, I brought over donuts and I gave him the choice of which donut he wanted, so I should get the choice of which ball we play with."

For Girls:

Leah: "I invited Rivky over to my house to play. She came over and we decided to play handball. I wanted to play with the ball that bounces higher but she wanted to play with the newer ball. I say that since it's my house she has to play with the ball that I want."

Rivky: "My parents always tell me that we should be nice to guests so I don't know why she says she should decide. Anyway, I brought over donuts and I gave her the choice of which donut she wanted so surely I should get the choice of which ball we should play with."

Secret #11

Answers to the Test Questions

1. False
2. True
3. True
4. False
5. True

Tips and Suggestions

The discussion question explores why people resist criticism. This will help the children understand why tact is needed when correcting others.

Here are some of my students' answers to the discussion question: "Why do people usually argue with us when we point out that they did something wrong?"

1. They don't want to be embarrassed.
2. They don't agree that they are wrong.
3. They want to get back at you for telling them that they were wrong.
4. They are trying to avoid being embarrassed in front of other people who are listening.

Activity

After learning the secret, ask the children if they can recall an incident when someone corrected them, but in a way that embarrassed them. Remind them to be careful not to reveal who did it. Ask them how they felt, and if they would have listened better if they weren't embarrassed.

The Shalom Secrets Training Program for Schools

The best way to truly have the students absorb these ideas is to use the *Shalom Secrets* book and to add the Training Program toward the end of the year. Although the basics of the program can be taught verbally in a few sessions, it will not have the same lasting effect. Learning one or two secrets a week, discussing the ideas, engaging in the activities, and using the workbook is definitely the best method.

Each child should have his/her own copy of the book. It is helpful for the teacher to first explain the basic idea of the lesson before having the children open their book and read it on their own. Listening to it, reading it, discussing it, writing about it, and acting it out all serve to inculcate the ideas firmly in the children's minds and souls. Earlier in this guide we suggested helpful tips on how to enhance the lesson with enjoyable activities.

Once the class has completed the first 23 secrets, they are ready to embark on the Shalom Secrets Training Program.

Since this should be an intensive program, I advise schools to do the program for only 45 days. Days when there is no school, like Shabbos, also count toward the total of 45. During that time the Rebbe or teacher needs to spend about 10 minutes a day on the program, as will be explained.

Here are the four main components of the training program.

1. "Membership Cards"

Each child receives a membership card enrolling him or her in the "International Shalom Secrets

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Team." This is a colorful card with a place for the child's name on the front and all the SAYROC tools listed on the back. These beautiful high-quality cards will, א"י"ה, be available from sociallysmarter.com. In order to remain a member in good standing, the child must behave like a Shalom Secrets member. That means trying to do all that Shalom Secrets teaches. This includes adhering to The Simple Rule and using the SAYROC tools when appropriate.

If the child remains a member for at least 40 out of the 45 days, he is eligible for the *main prize* at the end of the program. This is a prize provided by the teacher or school as an incentive. There are also other requirements for the main prize, as will be described later.

Each time a child behaves unlike a Shalom Secrets member he or she loses membership for that entire day. Even if he misbehaves a few minutes before the end of that day, he loses his membership for that day.

In the beginning of the program you will not want to revoke a membership unless the child does not cooperate even after being reminded. It's difficult to change lifelong habits overnight. However, if after being reminded the child still doesn't cooperate, then the day's membership should be revoked.

When this happens, you don't have to actually take away the child's card. Just keep a running list of who has lost membership, and how many times. If the violation was really blatant like embarrassing someone in public, then you may want to revoke the child's membership without